



29 April 2018

## **Future Management of the Great Ocean Road Region**

### **Great Ocean Road Taskforce Submission:**

#### **Wye River and Separation Creek Progress Association Inc.**

The WRSCPA (PA) is pleased to make the following submission. The PA is the oldest representative organization of local residents and ratepayers and has been involved in raising and solving local issues for many decades.

1. The PA welcomes the formation of the GOR taskforce and agrees that an overarching co-ordinating body is desirable and necessary given the number of government agencies and competing commercial and residential interests in the GOR that causes significant confusion amongst the community and an ideal 'buck passing' between the authorities as to roles and responsibilities. The Birrarung Council set up to provide community input into protecting the Yarra River which is a similar 'corridor' situation could be a useful precedent to follow. An example of the various agencies that cause community confusion and lack of action due to responsibilities is the environmental improvement of a natural drainage gully running through a township such as Wye River to the ocean. Any weeds on the outskirts of the town boundary in National Parks would be Parks Victoria, which may then run through Council managed land (Colac Otway Shire) to deal with stormwater runoff through to the ocean. Any water extraction would be under Southern Rural Water control, sewerage treatment by Barwon Water or Septic treatment by Colac Otway Shire. When the stormwater passes underneath the GOR (which is VicRoads responsibility), onto crown land (owned by DELWP and managed by a foreshore committee whose income is derived predominantly through caravan park funds. That's potentially seven authorities to deal with one issue! No wonder the community is confused and no wonder these sorts of issues simply get neglected because they are all too hard to manage.

2. The PA would draw the taskforce's urgent attention to the Deakin University School of Architecture Climate Change report of several years ago (Phillip Roos' PhD Dissertation is part of that report) which predicted that large sections of the GOR (including Wye River foreshore camp ground and surf club) would be inundated by 2030. Climate change impact is obviously fundamental to any forward planning and may assist in focusing government's attention on the amount of funding required.

3. The PA submits that any new body should have adequate local ratepayer representation, not just through the various councils. The PA is concerned that any new body does NOT result in further centralisation of decision making and expenditure on the main centres. For example, Wye River's

experience with the amalgamation of its local foreshore committee into the Otway Coast Committee (a hard fought decision in which local concerns were completely ignored) has been very negative with a dramatic reduction in local investment/maintenance. Funds generated in Wye River have gone to Apollo Bay.

4. The PA rejects any attempt to change the currently gazetted town boundaries. The boundaries were set after significant local pressure and are an essential control for maintaining the character of Wye River, Separation Creek and Kennett River.

5. The PA submits that the current planning controls in the township, in particular the Neighborhood Character Overlay, must be maintained and respected under any new jurisdiction. There is substantial pressure on the NCO as people rebuild after the bushfires. Subdivision is another threat to our community, particularly to our fragile environment, which cannot cope with intensification of use.

6. The PA submits that given the two National Parks through which the GOR passes, an opportunity to collect significant revenue from tourism operators should be explored. This is quite common elsewhere in Australia and overseas eg Great Barrier Reef, Uluru, Yosemite. Any funds so generated should be hypothecated for GOR maintenance and investment. At the moment local ratepayers are heavily subsidizing tourism operators, particularly bus operators with public toilet maintenance and carparking.

7. The PA submits that any tourism developments must be carefully balanced with the interests of local residents and ratepayers. In particular tourism development must be respectful of the environmental attributes, which are the main assets of the GOR, and certainly the reason people wish to visit, live and stay.

8. The PA submits that there is an urgent need for basic tourism infrastructure eg new and improved public toilets and appropriate and sensitive parking arrangements in the smaller townships including Wye River and particularly Kennett River. Given the urgency, such infrastructure needs to be fast tracked while new governance arrangements are being sorted out.

9. The PA submits that the taskforce report should be immediately released upon receipt by the government so that local feedback can be sought, either in an informal or a formal way. The PA understands that time is of the essence for the taskforce, however local knowledge and experience is valuable before final decisions are made. To this end, the PA respectfully submits that the local consultation has been very late in the process and in particular is disappointed that Wye River, Kennett River and other smaller townships would not have been consulted except for the vigilance of our Community Renewal Association.

10. The PA submits that there are many opportunities to greatly enhance the tourism potential of the GOR particularly with a focus on traditional ownership and relics (eg the giant midden just before Skenes Creek which is completely neglected). Greater emphasis and story-telling about the original inhabitants of the region would be a great asset.

The many waterfalls in the hinterland are quite inaccessible (eg Wye River Falls). A walking track linking these 6 or 7 falls would offer a great reason to prolong a stay in Lorne or Wye River, Separation Creek and Kennett River Coastal Hamlets. The GOR walking track should be extended and linked from Apollo Bay to at least Lorne and possibly Torquay as a priority to create a world class walk fostering sustainable tourism along our beautiful coastline.

11. Apropos of tourism issues, the PA submits that signage is excessive and ugly on the GOR compared with other comparable roads eg Big Sur, North Queensland, or New Zealand in general. Reduction of size and amount of signage should be a priority. Excessive signage may be a symptom of the many competing agencies involved in the GOR currently.

The PA looks forward to receiving the report of the taskforce and commenting as may be appropriate.

Yours Sincerely

  
President WRSCPA  
